



Florida House of Representatives

Democratic Office

Franklin Sands
Democratic Leader

Geraldine F. Thompson
Democratic Leader Pro Tempore

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Florida House of Representatives

FROM: House Democratic Leader Franklin Sands and
House Democratic Leader Pro Tempore Geraldine Thompson

DATE: December 29, 2008

RE: FIXING FLORIDA's BUDGET: Let The Public Speak First

Decisions that will affect the lives of many Floridians are about to be made in a special session of the Florida Legislature that convenes January 5. This is an opportunity for the entire Legislature – not just a few members – to deliberate on all options for resolving a projected \$2.3 billion funding gap in the 2008-09 General Revenue Budget.

We urge Republican leaders to hold public hearings at the outset of the special session to discuss how spending reductions or new revenues, if any, should be allocated across the various policy areas of the budget.

While it may be convenient for lawmakers to simply agree in advance to a privately crafted budget proposal, we think it is more appropriate that the public be allowed to participate in a frank conversation involving all budget options.

Before final decisions about how to resolve the funding gap are made, the general public, various constituent groups and legislators deserve ample opportunity to comment in committees and councils. Budget transfers and cuts would impact thousands of citizens who have not yet had the opportunity to speak. Legislators need to hear those voices.

The bulwark of any democracy is an informed citizenry. Conducting business in the shadows may be easier, but it does not necessarily yield fair or good results. The upcoming special session offers a chance to examine the people's budget the way families review their own financial priorities during tough times: By having open talks with all options on the table.

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